THE

HARVARD REGISTER.

NO. II.

APRIL, 1827.

ESSAY ON THE WRITINGS OF IRVING.

True bard and holy!—thou art e'en as one
Who, by some secret gift of soul or eye,
In every spot beneath the smiling sun,
Sees where the springs of living waters lie.
Unseen awhile they sleep—till touch'd by thee,
Bright, healthful waves flow forth, to each glad wanderer free!

Mrs. Hemans.

We are among those who love to be amused as well as instructed, and feel as willing to have our hearts improved as our understandings enlarged. We are moreover ready to confess, that our affections are apt to wander away from the venerable classics, and the more abstruse studies, to twine themselves around the light productions of later times. We can, without regret, lay aside Homer and the mathematics, to take up the simple works which tell of our own day and generation, and introduce us into the society of our fellow men. We prefer to converse with an author in friendly intimacy, rather than to sit down and have him lecture to us in all the pomp and circumstance of learning. And whenever we meet with a writer, whose character admits of this freedom, we readily give up our more serious pursuits for a time, to enjoy his pleasant society. Such is the literary character of the author of the Sketch Book.

The works of Washington Irving display that happy talent, which is possessed by few, of pleasing the taste and gaining the good will of every reader. The truths he inculcates, and the moral instruction he gives, steal their way into our bosoms under the disguise of his beautiful language, and we find our stock of knowledge increased and our hearts improved, while we have been enjoying the purest pleasure. The familiarity of his style puts us at once at our ease. There is no straining to reach the high place of dignity, where authors are wont to sit; no tedious ceremony before we can be introduced to his presence. We take up a volume of his works, and we find ourselves making a morning call; we are seated in his study, and engaged in lively or sober conversation; there is no restraint—no embarrassment; he makes us entirely at home by his delightful familiarity. In short, the amiable qualities, the original and chaste humor of our talented countryman, are seen in all his productions.

The purity and good taste of Geoffry Crayon have done more than any thing else towards melting away the unnatural feelings, which have existed between England and America. To all the tauntings and boasting of the unkind reviewers and saucy travellers of our 'father land,' he has given that soft answer which turneth away wrath. He has gone forth to meet them in mildness, and by his winning manners lulled to sleep,—we hope to an everlasting sleep,—most of their bad feelings. The tear of sympathy has washed off the gall from the pen of the critic, and the smile of good humour chased away all his sarcastic intentions. But if he has thus raised our literature,—if he has thus broken down the prejudices which were against it, and by so doing won for himself the respect and esteem of another people, he more especially deserves that friendship and affection which is felt towards him by his countrymen. His love of his country, his vindication of her literature, both by word and deed, his vivid descriptions of her scenery and the manners of her inhabitants, his deep feeling, have graven for him an everlasting remembrance on the heart of every American.

And when we consider his powers and efforts without regard to the land of his birth, and his relation to this country as her most beautiful writer, we find ourselves still bound to him by a deep and intense interest. Every story of his

telling, every scene of his describing, chains down the attention and strikes every sympathizing cord in our bosoms. This is to be ascribed to the emotion with which he writes. When we are perusing his productions, we feel, to use his own words, that it is heart calling unto heart, and we are ever ready to acknowledge him to be the amanuensis of feeling. Whatever affection he delineates, whatever peculiarity of character he would illustrate, he so works himself into it, that it seems a part of his own nature; particularly when he touches upon a melancholy tale. We know that his humor has been most generally admired. But we love him most when he meditates among the tombs and moralizes among the monuments of the mighty, which are cold and heartless, as were the splendors which surrounded their living greatness; when he tells us in his pathetic language of the heart which was strained in affection until its vital strings were broken; or when he presents to our view the saddening picture of disappointed and injured love. While we contemplate this part of his literary character, we feel truly the worthlessness of pomp, the hollowness of power; we are ready to believe too, that sorrowing and suffering affection "withers down many a lovely woman into an early grave;" and the tear will moisten the page which speaks of the wounded delicacy, the repentant lover, and the forgiving spirit of her whom consumption is leading to the tomb. This may appear to some the romantic sensibility of youth; but it is a sensibility of which we suspect many whose hairs are growing grey have found themselves guilty.

In those efforts which have gained so much reputation on account of their original humor, the same delicate taste is discernible, which gives so much beauty to his sentimental works. There is in them nothing broad, nothing coarse, nothing that is not proper for the lips and thoughts of the most innocent; while they possess a richness and playfulness of description which entitles them to the highest rank among the productions of refined and chastened wit. Who has ever read, even for the twentieth time, the dolorous fate of poor Rip Van Winkle—his mysterious departure—the scene of his reappearance, when he gazes on his fac-simile of a son, without feeling good natured for a long time after it? And where is the weeping philosopher, who has retain-

ed his sorrowful visage, when listening to the wonders of Sleepy-Hollow, the gallantry of Ichabod Crane and his awful race with the headless Hessian?

But it is more particularly the style in which Irving writes, that has given him his well-merited popularity. He is, it is true, an essayist, but he has no one from whom he copies. He has found out a hitherto hidden, but beautiful path in literature, and has pursued it without a rival. He has melted down the roughness of our language, and given it a smoothness which few writers have been able to impart to it. In choosing his themes he has aimed at the beautiful rather than the sublime. He has not endeavoured to strike out new and dazzling thoughts, but has preferred to divide them into many mellow and beautiful tints by the prismatic power of his fancy. If his pictures are destitute of the force and boldness of Michael Angelo, they possess all the grace and softness of Raphael; and although he binds up with serpents no tortured Laocoon, still he is always presenting to us delicate and finely wrought Apollos and Venus de Medicis. When he gives us a description of scenery, whether it be the sublimity of the mountain or the loveliness of the valley, the page of print is turned to a picture, and we may almost be said to enjoy the beauties of rhetoric and painting at the same time. It matters not whether he speaks of nature clothed in the grandeur of our own land or in the softness of English landscapes, we always see the hand of a master sketching her likeness.

There are few writers more abounding with epithets and figures than Washington Irving, yet the former are seldom redundant and never misplaced, while there is no dragging in of the latter. His similes possess that charm of fitness which gives to metaphorical writing all its effect. They seem to grow out of the subject, and are the natural associations which are called up in the mind. As the stream flows along and receives much of its loveliness from the shadows it gives of the verdant banks, so are the figures of Irving the beautiful reflections of the objects among which the current of his thought winds its way.

We have said we were most pleased with the sentimental pieces of our author. This preference may be caused by the superior delicacy with which he describes the tenderest

emotions. In most tales of blighted love and hopeless passion there is a sickliness which is always disgusting. There is in his works none of this; he has exhibited to us the romance of love exactly as it is, mingling with our daily avocations and softening the rough features of life. He has given to it all the purity, innocence, and chasteness which belong to its nature. And there is no one, although he may not, like Ichabod Crane, possess a soft and foolish heart towards the female sex, who can read "The Wife," "The Broken Heart," "The Pride of the Village," without having the best feelings of his heart drawn out into delightful exercise.

We intended to speak of Irving's fine descriptions of English rural life and Dutch manners, and more especially of those specimens of beautiful irony scattered through his works, but our limits will not allow it.

Washington Irving has been blamed, particularly on this side of the Atlantic, for leaving his native land and giving up describing her beauties. We think this is harsh treatment. We are ready to fall in with the praise given to our country for the resources she affords to descriptive talent; we own with pride that our lakes, rivers, and mountains are an everlasting theme for the poet; that the history and character of the natives, the events of our revolution, and that sublime page in the history of the world, the landing of the pilgrims, form a prolific field for the novelist. But yet we doubt whether all this is so well fitted for the talents of Irving. There is a newness about us little congenial to the sentimentalist. We want that soft melancholy, those time-worn customs, possessed by other nations, which are the things that most exercise his talents. Besides, we know well that the heart of our favorite author is wholly patriotic. For whenever he could he has gladly come home for his scenes and his tales; and so long as the heart remains unchanged, so long as he loves this land above all others, we care not whether the banks of the Hudson, the summits of the Highlands, the villages and inns of England, the vine hills of France, or the peaks of the Alps, are the places where he builds up the works of his fancy.

T. B.

THE LAND OF NATURE.

"Trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all her magnificence."
Sketch Book.

Once upon a time, when I was on a visit to an uncle of mine, who resides in a romantic village on the Penobscot, in the further part of Maine, I was solicited one morning to go with him on a pigeon-hunt, as game was very plenty in those new and thinly settled parts. We accordingly provided ourselves with two small fowling-pieces and a crust of bread in our pockets—for hunters you know are apt to be hungry—and cheerly set off. My uncle, being an old, grey-headed man, whose vigor of body was not quite equal to the sportive turn of his mind, was seated on a red pony, while I walked by his side. We thus proceeded along between log fences, on a winding road, which led to the wilderness, and after some miles' travel, we approached its woody confines. I helped my uncle jump his horse over some fences, when, after having charged our pieces, we concluded to take different directions, threatening great carnage among the tenants of the forest.

I should have been wearied by the distance I had already travelled, had not the excitement arising from the expected delight I should have in hunting, dispelled every duller sensation. But these hunting pleasures, as I afterwards found, existed most in anticipation.

I had not proceeded far, however, before I espied, at a distance, on an awkward scrag of a decayed and leafless beech-tree, two black crows. Clapping my hand to the trigger and dropping my gun to a ready position, I crept cautiously along beneath a log fence, the better to conceal my approach, although the crows had been for a long time eyeing me with much suspicion. Having advanced within shot, I still would advance a little nearer, so as to be sure; but while my heart was palpitating and I was making one more step with my gun already levelled, away went the crows, whose flight I still followed with a sigh of chagrin, until they sunk from my sight into a distant part of the forest. Vexation! cried I with vehemence, the next time I will fire, if I get within sight; for my ardor was not to be damp-

ed by a single disappointment, especially as I expected to find a plenty more of game. So I wandered on among high, black stumps, where the land had lately been cleared up, gazing round after game, over rough and rocky hillocks, whose loamy surface had never yet been molested by the plough. Indeed, a distinguishing characteristic of this new country, and one which first attracted my attention, is the constant inequality of the surface of the earth, a gentle undulation, which reaches even to their village doors, as if some green sea in moderate agitation had become petrified in the midst of its motion, and assumed the more beautiful green of vegetable verdure. The plants and trees were nearly the same as in my native state, with the exception of high beech and birch trees, which overspread the whole country, and hung over the dark waters of the Penobscot in towering grandeur. But hush! hunters are always digressing.

Led on by one curiosity and another, I sauntered from hill to dale, it is impossible to tell where. At length I came to a little swamp so impenetrably thick and so filled with rotten wood, that I concluded it must be in a state of nature, for I could no where see into the full and thwarting underwood to the distance of one rod. I was much struck with this first view of "wild land," as the inhabitants term it, and proceeded on with the strong presumption of making more important discoveries. I now no longer cared for game, and although a sheering fox made light steps across a distant glade, yet he had lost the fascinating power of the crows. I was a student from Cambridge, and used only to the cultivated fields of Massachusetts; how could I fail of being interested in this eastern wilderness? The pleasures of taste and novelty soon displaced the lower sensations of the sportsman. It was the first part of September, and the rich foliage of summer had not yet struck her gay colors to the first frosts of autumn. Earth still retained her beauty.

After advancing a little way further, I at length was fairly embosomed in the true forest of nature. This was a truly original and strangely novel scene. The woods were deep and majestic, the timber heavy and clear from underwood. But what most astonished me was the prodigious quantity of perishing timber; aged trees falling and fallen in every state of decay. Some, overgrown with moss,

leafless, and forsaken by most of their limbs. Some reclining with burdensome weakness upon their younger and more vigorous neighbours; and others, from still greater infirmity, fairly levelled with the ground, their unwieldy trunks opening in mealy rottenness, and returning "unto earth as it was," which, by these new accessions and the protuberances, occasioned by old stumps, lay upon all sides in continual heaps and ridges; thus accounting for the undulatory surface of the open country. The soil, from its vegetable composition, is extremely rich and mellow, divested of sward or grass, with here and there a solitary, languid plant, enfeebled by shade. "Heaps upon heaps" lay the age-strown forest; the fallen trees thwarting each other in every direction, like armies, slaughtered by the unsparing hand of time.

I leaped for exultation and shouted in my enthusiasm; then involuntarily hushed, for fear of attracting some catamount, wolf, or Indian, as I imagined, and holding fast my gun, I now skulked through the interstices of thwarting trees, now sprang about a little lawn, gazing on all around with insatiable curiosity. Come over here, men of Europe, cried I, and behold the ruins of nature, for in your old countries, even the Alps's clifted sides are clothed with vineyards. You, indeed, can point out to us the picturesque remnants of perishing art, the mouldering grandeur of moss-grown abbeys, the lonely relics of Gothic castles, adding romance to sublimity; but here we will show you a *forest in ruins;* Nature, uninterrupted in her deepest recesses, and still continuing those wild operations which she has been carrying on ever "since the great flood;" the fruits of fertility being gathered again into the bosom of earth to afford nutriment in their turn to green posterity. Shall we compare this wild originality with the narrow remnants of art? Traverse, stranger, our native mountains, be awed at our cataracts, plunge into our caverns, and roam the diversified wilderness, then say if our country is not more than equal to romantic Switzerland.

There is something singular, and accompanied with a tinge of melancholy in contemplating a lofty forest tree, which has reigned in air for centuries, yielding at last in cowering submission to the strong hand of time, and render-

ing back again to earth that fertility, which it has so long been extracting from it. It is a scene remote from common life. Here, thought I, while I cast my eye down a wild glen among the woods, here I tread on earth never before pressed by the foot of a white man; but, while I was thus deeply cogitating, and not a leaf rustled to disturb the solemn silence of the forest, my hair suddenly stood on end at the hoarse, alarming caw-caw of a petulant crow among the thick boughs right above my head. You shall soon pay dear, thought I, for your intrusion, looking up in anger to find aim at her, but the leaves were so thick, that I could not. So prying round to find an opening, I no sooner discovered myself to the wary bird, than she immediately took flight.

Having now become sickened at the idea of hunting by this second disappointment, I determined not to give another crow a chance of crowing over me, so after wandering about for some time in the forest and fully satisfying my curiosity, I began to think of turning homeward. But to what point of the compass home lay was more than I could tell; by dint of perseverance, however, I succeeded in retracing my steps, finding my way out of the forest, and eventually to my uncle's house, where I arrived just before sunset. My uncle had got home on his red pony some time before me, but with as little to produce from his fowling wallet as I had myself. X.

THE DRAMA.

The moving picture of our changeful life.—*New Play.*

The drama is in its nature well fitted to conduce to the most rational enjoyment, while it is capable of imparting the highest moral instruction. The knowledge of the heart and an acquaintance with the power of the passions cannot better be obtained than through such a representation, as connects the motive with the action, and by a sensible train unites the consequence with the cause which precedes it. Poetry in its highest office should indeed be the minister of virtue. By assemblages of whatever is lovely in nature, by

glowing descriptions of the rich bounties of Providence, by faithful and winning appeals to whatever is worthy and generous in human conduct, it should inspire the heart with purer and more exalted gratitude, and enrich the character with nobler and more generous sentiments. Descriptive poetry has a charm by which it can gently enter into the feelings, and easily gain over the affections of the heart. But whatever may be its power either to please or to instruct, the drama, which includes the highest efforts of poetical genius, by presenting its lessons in a new form, produces more strong and permanent effects. It is no longer the feelings of the poet with which we are to sympathize. He, with his own feelings and emotions, is concealed. We are not kept at the cold distance of listeners to the story of honor and glory, of injured affection and outraged feelings. We see their operation, we hear the language they utter. Passion is working in the object before us; we engage with intense interest in the emotions which it is exhibiting in all the power of reality.

It is not merely by strong expression of generous feeling nor in the repulsive exhibition of hateful passion, that the drama is capable of improving and instructing. The vices of men are exposed to ridicule, and practices which the sober character of the moralist hardly descends to upbraid, under the keen reproofs of comic humour, become truly disgusting. It must, indeed, be acknowledged that ridicule, although a powerful; is a dangerous weapon in unskilful hands, and that comic scenes are too often allowed to embrace so much corruption as to pollute rather than purify the mind. This abuse does not, however, preclude the possibility of advantage, and although we cannot now find gratification increased by the intolerance of some habit unfriendly to virtue, while laughing at the ludicrous representation of vice burlesqued and exaggerated, yet we do feel that there is power in comedy, seasoned with satire against popular corruptions, while itself is pure from grosser improprieties, so to set them forth as to deserve and meet our absolute abhorrence. It may, notwithstanding, be objected that there is too much of the mirthful to unite instruction; that while even vice itself is rendered ridiculous, we may forget that it should be despised, and that the corrupting and

enervating influence of comic representation, as it does and has existed, has more weight against it than any fine spun theories in its favor.

The same, however, cannot be said of tragedy. In its character it is dignified, in its sentiments, exalted. It exhibits the noblest feelings of which we are capable. It involves its actors deeply in the consequences of the course they pursue. It unveils the secret motive, discloses the whole operation on which enterprises are built up, and in a moving, living miniature, sets forth the chances and the powers against which we must contend in the wide game of life in which we are all engaged. Men learn much of goodness by the excitement of sympathetic feeling. It is not solely through the medium of the impressive and deliberate language of persuasion, that we are to learn the enduring strength of virtue, and are to be urged forward to vigorous action, that we are to be inspired to the attainment of every bright quality which adorns humanity, and excited with boldness to seize the good which many lose "by fearing to attempt." We need the ardor and enthusiasm which the deeds themselves awaken, and while the lessons of duty strengthen the moral principle and improve the character, the high examples of conduct,

> "When gorgeous tragedy
> ..... comes sweeping by,"

seize upon the feelings, and irresistibly enliven the heart. We cannot look tamely on, while villany is plotting the destruction of unwary, unsuspecting innocence. We cannot, with listless coldness and indifference, see old age becoming the object of scorn and derision, the outcast from the bosom where it should be sheltered from the rough storms which gather around the setting sun of life, the closing scene of existence overwhelmed with the contumely of unnatural ingratitude. When poetry describes, we may indeed be moved and sympathize with the poet. But here we see injured kindness the victim of feelings too mighty to be subdued; we hear grief vent itself in the strong language of passion, frantic and wild, yet irresistible. The imaginings of the poet are all embodied. The picture is filled up; we have not to follow but are carried forward. We feel that we are among

the living and real beings who are suffering and sorrowing; we are melted to sympathy, are enkindled to anger, we are wrung with anguish, and tremble with all the torturing anxiety of suspense. And can it be possible, when we thus see and feel the enormity of wickedness, when vice is presented to us even in the pride of its power, in the confidence of its success, as the fountain whence flow the streams of misery which are destroying the foundations of contentment and happiness, that we do not become the stronger and more willing admirers of virtue? Even when innocence is wronged, and yields to reproaches, and guilt in its wicked devices has become victorious, can we refuse our assent to the beauty, the satisfaction of the one, and the hatefulness and deformity of the other? But the closing scene of the drama, which consummates the whole, is perhaps the most difficult and is certainly the most important in determining the tendency of the feelings and emotions which have been excited, and in satisfying the hopes and dispelling the doubts, which have been rising and thronging with every new incident. The only guide must be nature. Where death comes in to stop the tide of joy, cutting down at the same time the generous for whom we had hoped all happiness, and the wretch for whom, even in his previous success, we had imprecated the most direful vengeance, the only redeeming quality of the unwished for catastrophe, is its truth to necessity and its resemblance to the incidents of life. The interest has become almost overpowering, every feeling engaged, and though the scene be revolting yet we cling to it, and when thus excited, every impression is deep and lasting.

It is interesting to consider wherein consists the pleasure we derive from tragic representation. Men of different temperament differ in the limit to which the shocking may be allowed to extend without overcharging the mind with excitement. In all the solemn dignity and stately propriety of French tragedy, we feel but little interest. The most striking and affecting events transpire behind the scene, and it is left for the comparative calmness of narration to produce the corresponding emotions. This is doubtless better adapted to the more ardent and excitable dispositions of the French than the boldness of our tragedy,

which they have called barbarism. There is, indeed, much allowance to be made for the charm of a native language which we cannot feel—for the thronging associations united with many tender expressions which to us appear heartless—for the force and sweetness of those sounds which have ever been the medium of affection and afforded utterance to wants and consolation to grief. Yet, after all this, there seems to be a more daring sublimity in some of the English dramatic works; a more forcible display of events; a bolder disclosure of circumstances. Shakspeare, in his inimitable ardour of conception, and with his fearlessness of execution, brings death out among us in all its numerous forms, nor hesitates to throw the passions into the highest state of frenzied excitement. And in many instances it would almost seem that even the moral sublimity in which all his great scenes are clothed, would fail to support us under the accumulated weight of terrible and agonizing catastrophes, were it not for the strange propensity which all, in some degree, possess of hurrying to the scenes where calamities abound. This propensity cannot be resolved into idle curiosity, nor to the unreality of the dramatic representation. Men, with a kind of instinctive sympathy, crowd around the spot where suffering humanity is wrung with the agony of death, and assemble with one accord where desolation has been spreading itself among the noblest structures of art, and wander with pensive satisfaction where destruction has laid waste the monuments of exalted genius, and gaze with fixed and subduing interest with the forlorn and houseless stranger, upon the scene which was once his dwelling place. It cannot be that there is any thing satisfying in other men's afflictions. It is the pride of the generous to feel for calamity. Nor can it be ascribed to any reflection of our better lot, since nothing more surely than grief brings down the thoughts from unessential distinctions. The true source of this feeling seems to be *the love of excitement*. Such states are always followed by the utmost serenity of feeling. As the fury of the tempest when spent, so the violence of passion is succeeded by a still, delightful calmness, and our temper, like the air we breathe, is purified by the agitation into which it has been thrown. N. R.

A VISION OF THE UNIVERSE.

From the German of Jean Paul Fr. Richter.

I was lately reading Krüger's observations upon the old, popular error, according to which, the space between one planet and another, between the planets and the sun, and, more than all, the immense space between one solar system and another, was supposed to be a vacuum.

The sun, with all its planets, fills but the 31,419,460,000,000,000th part of the distance to the next sun.

Heavens! thought I, in what an immense void must the universe be swallowed up, if nothing were full, but the few scattered, shining atoms, which we call a system. If we supposed the ocean to be void and without life, and the peopled islands to be no larger than snail-shells, we should commit a smaller error in measurement, than formerly existed, with regard to the emptiness of the universe. And the inhabitants of the ocean would be guilty of a still smaller one, if they believed their element alone to be filled and peopled, and all above and around it to be an empty, uninhabited space. If, according to Herschel, the farthest nebulæ are at such a distance from us, that their light, which to-day reaches our eyes, must have gone forth two million years ago; so that whole firmaments may appear to us to be still shining on, when in reality they have long been extinct; in what fearful abysses of nothingness would the universe be buried, if we suppose it pervaded and bounded by so extensive a vacuity.

But, can we for a moment forget the powers which must be continually flowing to and from those distant orbs in order that the path to them may become navigable to our vision? Does not light pervade the immeasurable spaces between our earth and the farthest nebulæ? And may not a world of spirits exist in those floods of light, as well as thy spirit in the ether-drop of thy brain?

Among these and similar thoughts I was surprised by the following dream:

My mortal frame, I dreamed, fell from me, and my inner form came forth, bright and etherial.

Near me stood a figure similar to my own, which did not shine, but flashed incessantly. "Two thoughts," said this Spirit, "are my wings, the thought *here* and the thought *there*. Think and fly with me that I may show and unveil to thee the universe." And I flew with him. The earth rolled swift away beneath our meteor course, but palely lit by some few southern constellations, and vanished in the abyss of darkness. At last nothing remained of our firmament but its sun, which seemed like a small star, and the scattered trains of some distant comets. A nearer comet which had just left the sun of our system and was moving on toward Sirius, shot by us like lightning.

And now we flew mid countless suns, so rapidly that they had scarce expanded to the size of moons before us, when they dwindled to nebulæ behind us; their planets we could not distinguish in our rapid flight. The earth's sun, and Sirius, and all the constellations, and the milky way of our firmament, lay far beneath our feet, like a bright mist among smaller, nearer clouds. And on we flew through the starry wilderness. One firmament after another expanded before us and dwindled behind us; and far beyond, nebulæ lay piled upon nebulæ in cloudy splendor, like a triumphal arch for the Eternal Spirit.

At times the guiding form outflew my weary thought and gleamed on high, like a comet's train beside some far-off star, till I again thought, *there*, and was again at his side. But, as we wandered from one starry waste to another, and the heavens above us grew no thinner, and the heavens beneath us no fuller; and as continually, new suns and new systems rolled downward and were lost in that sea of light, as the floods of a tempest mingle with the ocean; my o'erfull heart grew faint and longed to exchange this boundless temple of suns for the narrow cell of devotion; and I asked the spirit, Has the universe no end? And he answered, "It has no beginning."

But lo! suddenly, the heavens above us seemed emptied of their splendor; no star twinkled in the pure darkness. And on we flew, till the firmament beneath us, also, dwindled to a thin, pale cloud, and then vanished. And I thought—*here* the universe ends. And I startled at the dark prison-wall, which here divided creation from the dead sea

of nothingness, in whose bottomless gloom the universe, like a small, bright gem, sunk deeper and deeper. And I could only see the twinkling form of my guide, but not my own, for there was no light to illumine it. Then answered he my silent terror,—"Thou of little faith! look up! the old, primeval light is approaching!" I looked up, and there appeared, first, a dawning, and then, immediately, a milky way, and then, as suddenly, a whole shining firmament. The most transient flash of thought was too long for the work of those three moments. Since many a grey millenium, the light of those distant orbs had been on its way to us, and reached us at last on those immeasurable heights. And now we moved as through a new age, through new heavens. And then, again, came another starless night, and a longer interval, before the rays of another firmament reached us. And upward still we mounted, through endless vicissitudes of day and night. Each new heaven gave place to a new void, and each new interval of darkness grew longer than the preceding. And, as suddenly, we came from one of these intervals to an Aurora Borealis of blazing suns, which seemed struggling with their planets, and it appeared as if a judgment day were burning on every orb around us, and, as we passed through those fearful realms, the workshop of nature, where worlds are formed, where mighty floods rolled above us, and long streams of lightning flashed through the chaos; where one vast, dark, leaden sun-ball absorbed light continually, but grew no brighter;—and, as I beheld, in those boundless depths, a mountain-pile with a flaming snow-crown of crowded suns, and saw, even above those mountains, still, new nebulæ and new firmaments;—my spirit rose and swelled beneath the pressure of the universe; and I said to my companion, Hold! lead me no farther! I feel too lonely in the creation, I am lonelier still, in its deserts; the full world is vast, but the empty world is vaster, and, with the universe, the void increases. But the Spirit said,—"Before God, there can be no void. Round the stars, and between the stars, is the real Universe. Thy spirit can comprehend only the earthly forms of that which is unearthly. Behold, then, those forms!"

And, lo! my eyes were opened, and I saw an immeasur-

able ocean of light, in which the suns and planets lay scattered like dark, rocky islands. I was not on the sea, but in it, and the sea had no bottom and no shore. All the spaces between the planets and the systems were filled with light: and there was a thundering like that of the deluge, and a sweet, low murmuring, like the music of birds; and no confusion. The light and the sounds overpowered my heart. I was filled with joy, without knowing whence it came. It was a rejoicing in existence and in eternity. And a nameless love, I knew not, I cared not for whom or for what, overwhelmed me, when I looked around in this new world of light. Then said my companion, "Thou mayest now comprehend the world of spirits; to the earthly eye and ear there are none; they can perceive only the material world in which *these* live and work. Now, therefore, child of man, let thy spiritual eye behold, and thy dreaming heart comprehend."

And my eye beheld, at once, the nearest and the most distant. I saw all the immeasurable spaces through which we had passed, and all their firmaments. The suns floated in that ethereal element like gray blossoms, and the planets like seed-kernels.

And my dreaming heart comprehended.—Immortality lived in those spaces; death existed only in the worlds. Tall shadows walked in human shape upon the suns; but they became transfigured when they went thence, and sunk into the sea of light. And the dark pilgrim-stars were but the cradles of the infant spirits of the bright universe. In the intermediate spaces alone, sounded, shone, and breathed, all life and power. The suns seemed like the revolving wheels, and the planets the shuttles of the loom by which was woven the woof of the immeasurable Isis-veil which overhung creation, and which but stretched and lengthened when a finite being attempted to lift it.

There, in the midst of living infinity, there could be no more grief, but bliss without end, and a prayer of joy.

Amid the glories of this new revealed universe, my companion had become invisible; he had gone to his home in the world of spirits. I was alone and longed for some kindred being. Then rose and floated along from the lowest depths, and through all the thousand stars, a dark body;

and it climbed the lofty seas of light, and upon it there stood a human figure, like an infant, which changed not, nor increased as it drew nearer.

The dark body was our earth, and it stood before me, and upon it stood the infant Jesus.—And the infant looked upon me so kindly, so mildly, and so full of love, that I awoke with love and joy.

But my joy continued after my awaking, and I said, O! how sweet to live in this full, glorious universe, and how sweet to die! And I thanked the Creator for this life upon the earth, and for a future life without the earth.

H. H.

LITERARY SUCCESS OF FEMALE WRITERS.

One of the idlest questions that have ever been started by the curiosity of the speculative, is that of superiority on the part of either of the sexes; a question, which takes it for granted that the all-ruling Being, who has manifested in the works of his creation the most boundless goodness and benevolence, has formed exactly one half of his rational creatures with an inferiority of intellectual powers, and a consequent inferiority of rank in the scale of intelligence. To discuss this question, however, would be to suppose that some of our readers are believers in the doctrine of a superiority on one side or the other, and we would not be understood to convey such an idea even by implication. Our purpose, moreover, is nothing more than to offer a few remarks on the opinions that have been entertained in regard to female learning and female authorship, and the success which has attended the efforts of distinguished writers among the other sex, and influenced the literary character of the age; which purpose we design to accomplish after making a few preliminary remarks.

It is curious to observe the various notions that have been entertained in different ages in regard to the relative character and rank of women, the place they ought to hold in society, the respect they ought to receive, and the duties they ought to perform. Among some nations they have been viewed as many degrees below "the lords of crea-

tion," worthy to be the mere slaves of their haughty masters, and absolutely unfit to participate in their councils, advise them in difficulties, sympathize in their sorrows, rejoice in their prosperity, and share with them on equal terms, in all the cares, troubles, and joys that diversify the scenes of this variegated life. At other times we behold them elevated to a rank almost equal to beings of a celestial nature, and receiving the homage of humble and suppliant adorers. Men have acted as though they thought woman a complete puzzle, and the treatment she ought to receive an enigma beyond the reach of human ingenuity to solve. In general they have manifested the singular notions, the strange feelings, the awkward and blundering actions that show themselves in the conduct of the clown when he first experiences certain queer and undefinable sensations at the sight of the rustic beauty, whose charms have bewildered his fancy and led astray his imagination.

The whole tenor of classic literature shows that woman was by no means held in proper estimation among the most polished nations of antiquity. We occasionally read of one, it is true, who overstepped the limits prescribed to her sex, and astonished the philosophers and orators by striking displays of a cultivated taste and a brilliant imagination, but these were like the meteors of heaven that from time to time appear above the horizon, flash brightly across the sky, and then disappear forever. One or two among the Greeks discoursed profoundly on rhetoric and philosophy, and either by their beauty or their learning, or both, attracted large and admiring audiences. There was one, likewise, who assumed the lyre and breathed the deepest feelings of the soul in strains of impassioned tenderness, which, compared with the bacchanalian effusions of Anacreon, or even the more polished and delicate muse of Horace, put to shame, in propriety of expression and truth and depth of sentiment, all the boasted beauties of the one and the other.

During the reign of chivalry, the roving warriors who traversed the world in search of adventures were the most humble and devoted servants of the fair. The slightest token of regard from the hand of the object of his adoration was sufficient to awaken the prowess of the knight to deeds of the most daring enterprise. The frenzy that occupied

the brains of these bewildered and fanatical adorers of woman, led to a course of conduct the most extraordinary that has ever been detailed in the pages of history, or adorned by the splendors of poetical imagery. The deeds they performed, the perils they encountered, the foes they prostrated, while each maintained the superlative loveliness of his own adorable mistress, have been full often the theme on which the muse of modern days has lavished her richest ornaments and sung her most melodious strains. The high sentiments of gallantry that apparently governed the conduct of the knights, however beautiful they appear in the dim distance of ages, when contemplated from amidst the culture and refinement of these later days, and when separated from the darker shades that intermingle in the otherwise fair picture, when considered apart from the oppression that trampled in the dust the lower orders of society, and the pride, the intolerance, and ignorance that degraded the higher, yet were not sufficiently powerful and efficacious principles to prevent their high-minded devotees from sullying their characters by vice and profligacy of so deep a die that the matter-of-fact and less poetical morality of the present age would start from it with abhorrence. The rank in which the high born damsels of those days were placed, and the distant reverence with which they were treated, was one of the principal causes, strange as it may seem, of the gross immorality which then prevailed. The feelings that were then cultivated, and the sentiments that were cherished by the spirit of the times, were an outrage upon nature and could not but be most pernicious to morality. We must think, therefore, that the intellect of Mills was most strangely bewildered, when he painted in such glowing colors the happy effects that he imagined had sprung from this system of perversion, and dilated with such exstatic admiration upon the glorious influence that was exerted by the spirit of chivalry.

In process of time, however, this fanaticism began to pass away, partly on account of the increase of knowledge which opened gradually the eyes of mankind to a sense of their own absurdity, and partly on account of the ridicule which minds of a penetrating cast began to throw upon the nonsensical marvels of knighthood. Woman has been ever since

gradually acquiring the influence in society which the God of nature designed she should possess; she has gradually descended from the high elevation to which she was raised by the folly and extravagance of man, to that equality with the other sex which her powers and capabilities fairly entitle her to, and which we venture to assert, all women of sense would prefer to a groundless, factitious and precarious superiority. But since the vagaries of chivalry have passed away, absurdities, less striking, indeed, but equally extensive have taken root and gained strength in society; and though poets have sung the beauty, or lamented the disdain of the fair, yet the book of knowledge, the most precious boon of existence, to them has been sealed. The female mind has been neglected, and consequently, deprived of all the pleasures which letters and science afford in every situation of life. She who would attempt to adorn her mind with knowledge beyond the small portion allotted to the generality of her sex, has heretofore been considered as going beyond the bounds of female propriety, and the fear of being marked out as an object of ridicule, has prevented many an ingenuous female from making those acquirements, to which she would otherwise have devoted herself with all the enthusiasm of genius. Satire upon satire has been written against learned women, and the reputation of being a *blue stocking* has been a source of more terror than the fear of death. Men whose superior minds ought to have raised them above the prejudices of the vulgar, have been guilty of uttering anathemas upon female learning, which would now disgrace the lips of the veriest smatterer. These feelings and views have happily passed away, and sentiments more consonant with the moral dignity of mankind, and the liberal and enlightened spirit which always guides the sincere inquirers after truth, have been adopted in theory, and exemplified in practice. Those accomplishments which serve merely to set off a fine person to advantage, are not the only elements which are considered as necessary to a complete female education. Those branches of learning which refine the feelings of the soul, and elevate and ennoble human nature, are now cultivated by females with an ardor which shows that in whatever points, and in whatever degree, the minds of women may differ from those of men,

they were both equally endued by nature with the capacity of advancing in a course of endless improvement. After it began to be perceived, that knowledge ought not to be the exclusive property of man, there were many remaining, who were unwilling to give up the old theory entirely, and therefore contented themselves with allowing the other sex a slight acquaintance with the lighter departments of literature. A little reading of poetry, and now and then a novel, they were forced to allow, would be quite harmless amusements, especially if they were not suffered to interfere with the every-day duties of real life; but as for the abstruser sciences they still maintained, it would be a monstrous perversion of nature for a woman to meddle with them. Experience has shown the error of their calculation. Ever since females have been allowed by the omnipotence of public opinion, to enter the paths of knowledge without being stared at by those who have gone before them, as prodigies and marvels and exceptions to the course of nature, they have been continually gaining ground, and their success in the prosecution of liberal learning, has gradually, yet with unerring certainty, banished the prejudices which before had kept them back from entering on a career of intellectual improvement. Every branch of polite literature has been cultivated by them with eminent success, and without going far for examples, we might easily show, that even the difficulties and abstrusities of mathematical science have not been able to deter them from engaging in a study, which is usually thought so dry and uninteresting. In short, we believe and hope the tendency of this age is to give unlimited admission to the other sex into the arena of literary competition. We would not be understood to assert the propriety of their engaging in all kinds of scientific pursuits; for we believe there is an adaptation by nature of the female mind to certain paths in the field of knowledge rather than others. We must protest, therefore, against all preaching, lecturing, and oration-making being done by the ladies. But literature will never be what it ought to be, until females contribute their portion, freely and fearlessly, to its formation. The expression of feeling, the creations of the imagination, the brilliant flashes of wit, the approbation of virtue, the censure of vice, the illustration of moral truth,

the delineation of whatever is great and inspiring in the human character, the description of self-sacrificing heroism, the enthusiasm, which the sublimity of moral and intellectual greatness and the beauty of mild and retiring goodness creates in the bosom of sensibility, the shadowing forth of the gentle affections, whose unobtrusive influence strengthens the bonds of society and sheds a hallowed serenity over the variegated scenes of life, are objects as interesting to the contemplation of woman, and as proper to be ornamented by the vivifying and adorning power of *her* genius, as by the brightest intellects among the other sex.

Female authorship has had many opposers. The sphere of female influence many have thought, and, we believe, some still think, ought to be confined to the scenes of domestic life and to the social circles that are formed in the common routine of friendly intercourse. It has been thought that the retiring delicacy which forms the principal charm of woman's character, is entirely inconsistent with her appearing before the world as an author. Why this should be so we are at a loss to imagine. There surely is no foundation whatever for this doctrine either in reason or nature. We are very far from underrating the influence that women, even when they do not become writers themselves, exert upon the literary character of the times. The happy effects of female society upon the minds of scholars and authors, have been beautifully described by the pen of a distinguished medical gentleman of this vicinity in a little work called "Disorders of Literary Men," and we cannot help recommending the fine observations in the chapter on this particular subject, to the frequent perusal of all who still believe that men of letters should give up the delights of social intercourse, and consider every moment as lost which is not devoted to solitary contemplation of the literary monuments of past ages. But why a woman of fine imagination and powerful talents should be denied the privilege of affording amusement to the world, and of winning the prize of literary distinction for herself, is a question which we never have seen fairly answered. Literature is the grand theatre for *mind* to exert itself in. It is the scene where genius is to exhibit whatever is pleasing and beautiful in the human character and condition, in forms of attractive

loveliness, and whatever is elevating and sublime, in all the splendid decorations that give us an inspiring feeling of something higher and nobler in our destiny, than any thing which has yet fallen within the scope of our experience. Now we conceive that *any* one who has the power of contributing to the accomplishment of this high object, not only has a right, but is commissioned by the supreme authority of Nature, and lies under an imperious obligation, to aid in the glorious work. That a female should be thought to violate the strictest rules of delicacy and propriety, by amusing and improving the world with literary efforts whose tendency is in a moral point of view, beneficial in the highest degree, is a thing far beyond the reach of our feeble comprehension. This subject has been fairly discussed by the most voluminous female writer of this or any age, the celebrated Madame de Genlis. In the preliminary reflections to her work on the influence of women upon the literature of France, she has stated at length the conditions which any woman who is to become an author ought to comply with, and they are such as must satisfy the scruples of those who tremble most for the consequences of the unconstrained admission of woman to all the rights and priviliges of authorship. She recognizes a peculiarity in the course which women ought to take in their literary career. She allows that the interests of government are entirely out of their province, that they have nothing to do with the controversies which agitate the world, that they should never intermeddle in political affairs, that even literary pursuits should be entirely forborne rather than that the all-important and permanent duties of domestic life should be in the least neglected, and that the particular object of all their literary efforts should be to delineate in language addressed to the imagination and the heart, the gentler affections of life, which soften the sorrows of adversity and give a new vividness to the joys of prosperity:—in short, that in becoming an author a woman may still retain in her character, and display in her writings, all the peculiar qualities that are thought to constitute the principal elements of female loveliness. These are doctrines, which, in our opinion, are perfectly correct, and which may be proved so, by numberless facts of actual experience.

The number and success of female writers, who have of late come forward and submitted their works to the test of public opinion, are remarkable phenomena in literary history. In France, Madame de Staël has rivalled the most boasted scholars of Europe in almost every department of literary and philosophical discussion, and the finest writers of fiction by the creations of her brilliant imagination; displaying in her "Germany" a profound acquaintance with every branch of literature, together with a discriminating judgment guided by liberal and generous principles in appreciating the beauties of writings, which were composed under the influence of circumstances so different from those which formed the literary character of her own countrymen; in her "Reflections on the French Revolution," manifesting an acuteness of observation, a depth of thought and a philosophic turn of mind that are rarely possessed by those who examine the great events that affect the destiny of nations, and present them to our minds in a connected chain of causes and effects; and in her "Corinne" showing herself capable of expressing in words of impassioned eloquence, the beautiful rhapsodies of the most high-toned and poetical enthusiasm. England has not been deficient. Mrs Radcliffe, in the bosom of quiet retirement, has imaged forth in her fictions, creations that none can contemplate without sensations of awful astonishment. Her pencil portrays to our imagination with fearful indistinctness the shadowy beings that people the unknown world, and creates an illusion often so strong that we are unable to look about us without catching a glimpse of some mysterious form whose spiritual nature has become vaguely palpable to our astonished eyes. And yet we know that while her writings were exercising the power of a magician's art over thousands and thousands of her readers, she was calmly and regularly performing all the duties that belong to a friend, an acquaintance, a wife. Among the poets, too, of the present age, who has sung in more melodious verse than Mrs Hemans? Whose strains breathe a holier inspiration, a purer and more fervent earnestness in the cause of virtue and morality than hers? Where is the harmony to which our language may be moulded, more perfectly exemplified than in her productions?

When we turn to our own country, the prospect that strikes our view is no less beautiful. The daughters of America have done not a little to elevate the literary character of their native land. Many of their productions, which have appeared within the last few years, do honor to themselves and their country, and are considered as among the finest efforts of American genius. In the departments of poetry and novel writing, they shine with distinguished lustre. Among the fugitive poetry that adorns the pages of our different periodicals, there is none that breathes a purer spirit than the effusions of "Cornelia." In the whole range of American fiction, nothing can be found more highly finished and more deeply interesting than "Redwood," "Hobomok," and "The Rebels." "Redwood" is more particularly distinguished for the perfect finish of the style in which it is written, and the graphic portraits of several of the characters, than for the expression of deep and powerful emotion. "Hobomok" and "The Rebels" both display an imagination rich almost to exuberance, and contain many highly wrought passages of affecting tenderness, which would do honor to the head and heart of any writer in any age. The list might be much farther extended, but we forbear.

Many of the most popular novels of the day are filled with scenes of feasting and revelry and vulgar dissipation, which, whatever be their merit in point of descriptive truth, cannot but render the moral effect upon a large portion of the community at least dubious. But the purity and delicacy that characterize the pages of our female writers, while they remove their works, perhaps, one degree farther from the truth of actual life, afford an abundant compensation in the high tone of feeling they exemplify, and the elevation of sentiment they inculcate. C. C.

POETRY.

[Perhaps we owe our readers some apology for the sober character of a large part of the poetry of our present number. We trust, however, they will excuse it in consideration of the mournful events that have lately taken place within the walls of our University. In our first number we recorded the death of a young and promising member of College. Since that time the Destroyer has again entered the shades of literary retirement, and aimed his fatal shaft at the life of one who possessed, in a rare degree, the qualities that most engage our affection and esteem. Mr Davis, a few months ago, was earnestly engaged in the prosecution of his favorite study—Theology. This, from his earliest youth, was the profession of his choice; to this he devoted his time and talents with a singleness of purpose which promised extensive usefulness in after life. While employed in preparing to go forth into the world and to labor in the cause of virtue, morality, and truth, he was interrupted by the approach of disease and the pains of a dying bed. His loss will long be felt by those who knew him, and his virtues will be cherished and remembered. The social circles which he often joined, and to which he was always welcome, cannot soon forget his polite manners, pleasing conversation, and amiable disposition. What we have said is not unmeaning and heartless praise. From a long and intimate acquaintance, we feel authorized to bear our strongest testimony to the deep felt excellence and purity of his character.

Before the following lines were received, several shorter pieces were in type, the authors of which will, we trust, excuse us for deferring them to our next.]

ON THE DEATH OF W. B. D.

We saw him late in the busy throng,
With youth's brightest lustre round him,
And Hope was fresh,—and many and strong
Were the ties to life that bound him.

On his youthful cheek, where Health's rosiest bloom
Mixed sweet with a native meekness,
We could trace no sign of an early tomb,
No mark of latent weakness.

We knew not that beneath those flowers
The sting of Death lay lurking,
Nor how, in the midst of his gayest hours,
Its venom was silently working.

We looked again, and the roseate bloom
Had grown to a hectic brightness;
'Twas life's parting glow, and its crimson gloom
Soon chang'd for a deadly whiteness.

We saw him next on the bed of pain,
With a fever's throes contending;
We saw each light of promise wane,
Each hope in darkness ending.

O! many a fond and fervent plea
For him to Heaven ascended,
From hearts where deep-tried *piety*
With deep-tried *love* contended.

We saw, by his couch, a Mother's care
With a Friend's kind efforts vying,
And marked—till fear became despair,—
How fondly they watched the dying.

With what anxious thrill and stifled breath,
They beheld the victim languish!
The space 'twixt the flash and the stroke of Death,
Was to them an age of anguish.

What deep affection saw we there!
By long agony tried and chasten'd,
Till each torturing hope was lost in the prayer,
That the mercy-stroke might be hastened.

We saw him last, when each wish was stilled,
And past each vain endeavour;
And the heart, that once so warmly thrilled,
Could thrill no more, for ever.

And we wept,—for bitter seemed that hour
And the fate, that robbed us, cruel,—
The garland of Friendship had lost a flower,
And Virtue's crown a jewel.

We wept, for another doom had told
The frailty of earthly promise;
A lov'd and loving heart lay cold,
And a cherish'd hope went from us.

But the pang has past, and we weep no more:
Though to us it be not given
In this judgment to trace,—we will trust and adore
E'en in this,—the sure mercy of Heaven.

We weep no more,—the broken tie,
By its rupture a soul hath deliver'd;
And a Friend hath gone to his rest on high,
Where ties are no more severed.

We weep no more,—*He* sought on earth
A *sphere* to Heaven the nighest,
And the joys, which he deemed of the highest worth,
Are *there* the seraph's highest.

H. H.

CHANGES.

Brightly shone the sun at morning,
From a warm and brilliant sky;
Nature's lovely face adorning,
Lighting up the arch on high,
But the clouds begin to gather,
And at eve the rain drops fall;
Darker, colder frowns the weather,
Thick, black clouds envelope all.

Thus in life's young morning, round me
Lay a landscape fresh and fair;
The ties of love and friendship bound me,
All was joyous, free from care.

Soon the bands of friendship parted,
Love's new ties too soon were torn;
Lone, and cold, and broken hearted,
Life's dark evening I must mourn. J.

LINES SUGGESTED BY A DEATH-BED SCENE.

I LOOKED upon a form, where Death
With feeble Life was struggling still;
Pale was his cheek, and hushed his breath,
And, save at times, the passing thrill
Frail nature feels, when Death hath driven
The life blood to its source, he lay
As one with Spirit passed away,
Whose meed was won, whose rest was heaven.

He woke to life once more and sorrow,
His glance unearthly brightness shed,
Too plain it told the coming morrow
Should count him with the silent dead;
'Twas the soul's triumph; nature quailed,
Yet his eye spoke the hope of bliss,
(The joy of worlds unknown to this)
Of immortality unveiled.

It was the stilly "noon of night,"
No murmur woke the silent air,
A taper shed its feeble light
On one who knelt in voiceless prayer
Beside the couch of many tears;
She smiled on him, twas some relief,
Hiding in heartless smiles her grief,
To cheat with hopes that were not hers.

It is a mother's love alone
Whose care can ease the anguished frame,
That still will hope when hope there's none,
Through life unchangingly the same.
She laved his lip, and soothed his pain,
She kissed the death damp from his brow,
Could Death relent, would he look now,
That smile had won his life again.

On earth his eyes were closing fast,
The springs of life were drying up.
"God of my fathers, ere he 's past,
Mix mercy in the bitter cup."
Her son unclosed his heavy eye,
He looked on her and then to heaven
As he would say, "Though life be riven.
My soul with God shall never die."

Her child, the mother to the grave,
Yields, taintless from a life so brief,
There solace, though she might not save,
That the young spirit knew not grief.
But when all hopes are wrecked in one,
And manhood falls, earth seems forsaken.
'Tis but a pledge by mercy taken,
To win the mother with her son.

Free of heart! thy memory yet
Comes o'er us, as when life was thine,
And ours are hearts that ne'er forget
The ties that fond affections twine,
Till the throbbing pulse shall cease.
Rest thee, by the sainted laid!
Sleep unforgotten with the dead!
Rest, sainted spirit, rest in peace. K.

CAMBRIDGE ATHENÆUM.

The number of periodical Reviews and papers has now become so great, that it requires no small labour to keep the run of them as they come daily from the press. Literature and science are continually assuming a more and more popular form, and instead of confining their influence to a few favored individuals, are gradually diffusing themselves among all classes in the community. Knowledge has been drawn out from the cumbrous folios and quartos in which it has been imprisoned, and now enjoys a free and healthful circulation. All new discoveries in experimental philosophy, all new theories in ethics and politics are spread with the most astonishing rapidity to the remotest corners of the earth, and are at once examined and discussed by a thousand minds, and illustrated and diffused by a thousand pens.

It is, then, of no small importance for every man who wishes to be even with the age, to have access to all the different sources of information. Where so many periodicals are necessary to be read in order to obtain a knowledge of what the world is doing and thinking, but few, comparatively speaking, can conveniently be at the expense of procuring them all. This difficulty is entirely obviated by the establishment of Reading Rooms. The *combined* efforts of several are in all cases much more effectual, than the *separate* exertions even of an equal number. This is particularly true in cases like the present. The subscribers to the Athenæum enjoy the privilege of reading the interesting and valuable pages of the Edinburgh, Westminster, Quarterly, and North American Reviews, at the expense which only *one* of these works would amount to, if taken separately. Not only these leading works, but many periodicals of a lighter cast, and all the most important newspapers of the day, are promptly received. But it is obvious that the usefulness of such an establishment must depend in a great measure on the patronage it receives. The greater the number of those who unite in promoting its interests, the greater will be the advantage to each individual. This consideration alone, we think, ought to insure to the Cambridge Athenæum the patronage which is necessary to its support, and which, from the importance of its objects, it so well deserves.